



eNews from Sen. Lisa Murkowski - December 14, 2007 - Vol. 3, Issue 17

[Visit Senator Murkowski's Web Site](#) - [Download a Print Version](#)

Senator Murkowski Wins Passage of Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Tax Legislation

Today is a great day for the approximately 30,000 plaintiffs in the Exxon Valdez oil settlement case. I have negotiated passage of legislation that will provide tax relief so that the fisherman and Alaskans who will receive punitive damages will be able to keep more of the money they rightfully deserve. It was critical to get this legislation passed now in anticipation of the Supreme Court's final decision next spring, and I am thankful for my colleagues support in the Senate.

The bill provides tax relief to all of the individual plaintiffs in the oil spill settlement, 80 percent of whom are commercial fisherman. It was drafted to cover any possible settlement while the case is in litigation and any amounts received under the judgment if it is upheld.



80 percent of the individual plaintiffs in the Exxon case are fishermen.

Senator Murkowski Praises Passage of Senate Energy Bill

Last night, the Senate passed a comprehensive energy bill. This legislation is a great step in reducing energy costs for Alaskans and the nation. While the bill is not the total solution to our country's energy needs, it does make major advances in aid for renewable energy and promotes greater energy efficiency in vehicles, buildings and appliances. The bill does not contain the provisions many of us wanted to include to increase supplies of domestic

energy. I am hopeful that now that Congress has agreed to significant conservation through an increase in CAFE and has agreed to provide for investments in renewable energy that we will address the third critical aspect of energy policy by increasing domestic production.

One of the most exciting provisions for Alaska in the energy bill is a Renewable Energy Deployment Grant program that I authored with Senator Stevens. That measure will provide federal grants of up to 50 percent of the cost of building a wide variety of renewable electricity projects: wind, geothermal, ocean (wave, tidal and current), biomass, solar, landfill gas and small hydroelectric projects in Alaska. The grant program, when funded, should help with the installation of potential projects like the Fire Island wind farm, and ocean energy projects in Cook Inlet or Southeast.

To learn more about the Energy Bill [click here](#).

Senator Murkowski Chairs Senate Indian Affairs Field Hearing in Anchorage

On November 30, I held a Senate Indian Affairs field hearing in Anchorage to investigate health care access for Alaska Native Veterans. I focused specifically on how to provide care to the soldiers of the Third Battalion, 297th Infantry of the Alaska National Guard who recently returned from a year's service in Kuwait and Southern Iraq. The 580 soldiers of the 3/297 represented 81 communities throughout Alaska and include substantial numbers of Alaska Natives and other residents of the bush communities of rural Alaska.

What we heard at the field hearing is that the Department of Veterans Affairs has only a nominal presence in rural Alaska, if any presence at all, and that all too often our Native Veterans must travel great distances, at their own considerable expense, to receive the health care benefits that our country has promised them. I do not intend to let this matter end with a field hearing. I will continue to explore legislative and non-legislative solutions to ensure that the commitments we have made to our country's warriors are honored and meaningful. One possible option raised at the hearing that I am investigating is the use of existing health care infrastructure of the Alaska Native health system in our rural villages and communities, and providing reimbursement arrangements between that system and the Department of Veterans Affairs.



Senator Murkowski listens to testimony from members of the Alaska National Guard who recently returned from active duty in Kuwait.

Senate Passes Defense Authorization Legislation

Today the Senate passed the conference report for the Defense Authorization Bill. The legislation authorizes \$696.4 billion for defense spending in FY 2008. Some of the highlights of the bill include:

- 3.5 percent across the board pay raise for all uniformed service personnel,
- Increased monthly hardship duty pay from \$750 to \$1,000, and
- Passage of the Wounded Warriors Act which is aimed at ensuring that our returning soldiers receive the care that they have earned and rightfully deserve.

Alaska Delegation Staff Send Care Packages to Alaska Troops

I'd like to thank staff members from the Alaska Congressional delegation offices who recently donated food and supplies to fill care packages that will be sent to members of the Alaska Army National Guard, B Company 297th Task Force. The care packages will arrive in time for Christmas.



Staff members fill care packages destined for Iraq.

Senator Murkowski Shares Safety Steps for Winter Weather

Winter brings bitter winds, icy paths and dipping temperatures. But perhaps the most chilling result of wintry weather is the marked increase in home injury during this season. Carbon monoxide, home fires and power outage hazards pose harmful threats to our families and their well being. Unfortunately, only 35 percent of homeowners have a carbon monoxide detector in their home – leaving more than half of families exposed to this silent killer.

[Click here](#) for a list of precautions you can take to protect yourself and your families.



Senator Murkowski meets with members of Anchorage Boy Scout Troop 8 who were working on their First Class Badge

[SUBSCRIBE](#) [UNSUBSCRIBE](#)

Washington, D.C. Office 709 Hart Senate Building Washington D.C., 20510 202-224-6665

[Click here for a listing of our Alaska offices](#)

